

# THE CHAMPION

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## ARCADIA { PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE By REV. DR. JAS. P. DePASS.

WE DO NOT PROPOSE to give an extended history of Arcadia, but a brief, succinct account of her past, present and future, with a few general remarks on DeSoto county.

### Settlement.

Arcadia was settled about seventeen years ago and commenced its history with a little prospect apparently of a future. The men who represented the town were influential and wealthy and began to build with the hope of growth and development. About the time the town had its beginning the A. C. L. ran its road from Lakeland via Bartow, to Punta Gorda, which gave impetus to improvements and inspired hope for future prosperity. The great freeze of 1895 added impulse to its growth, since the orange trees here were not damaged like they were north of this county when immigration set in and Arcadia increased in business and population quite rapidly.

DeSoto county in the meantime also received a large influx of people who devoted themselves to orange growing and vegetables. The result was, in a few years Arcadia became a point of unusual trade and mercantile activity. The freeze demonstrating Florida's best orange soil as an epoch maker for Arcadia. The town grew annually and prospered until last year the population had grown to over 600 persons.

### The Big Fire.

On November 30th, 1905, the long prophesied fire of Arcadia occurred, through the careless lighting of a pipe or cigar. In a few hours the business part of the town consisting mainly of wooden structures was in ashes, except the First National Bank, D. T. Carlton's brick block and W. H. Seward's brick store. All of which were damaged by the fire and nothing saved them but the heroic efforts of volunteer fire fighters. Indeed we might say the balance of the town was thus saved, for by cool headed, wise men, prompt to act, who ought to have received the gratitude of the parties benefited forever did heroic work. Among the foremost of the fire fighters was A. M. Smith, agent for the A. C. L. R. R. who immediately upon the alarm of fire, saw at once the danger of the part of the town in which was the depot, at once wired for all the engines north and south to come to Arcadia's relief and to bring all the section masters and hands along the route. This prompt and wise act of Mr. Smith saved the town on the south side of the railroad and J. J. Heard's and Steve Carlton's packing houses on the north and all the railroad property, to say nothing of many carloads of oranges ready for shipment. A. M. Smith is now the cashier of the South Florida Loan & Trust Company in which company his ability will be appreciated. This leads us to remark that railroad companies appear to have a generous for neglecting ability and of paying small wages, thus losing her best men, and a talent for employing small and cheap men and placing them in responsible positions which may account in a great measure for the many accidents which almost daily horrify the nation. A different policy would both serve them and others and the traveling public.

### Rise in Property.

One of remarkable results of the fire was the rise of real estate the next day. Lots in the burnt district went up one or two hundred per cent and contractors were in demand.

### Arcadia's Enterprise.

The enterprise of our merchants was readily seen for in a few days they had built commodious wooden,

and sheet iron stores, shops etc. and business resumed, in a week its normal conditions, which has increased every day and week the past year.

To give some idea of the business push and the progressive spirit of our business men. After the lapse of almost a year, beginning on the west side of town, we see in the place of common wooden structures, when the fire began, going east on the left side of Oak street Gore & Scott's commodious stone block, two stories, corner occupied by Gore & Scott, a prosperous mercantile firm, and the next by the South Florida Loan & Trust Company of which J. J. Heard is president and M. E. Goldsmith is general manager and A. M. Smith, cashier. Espenlaub's Market is the next stone building with all modern improvements. Overhead is THE CHAMPION office. Adjoining him is J. J. Heard's stone block of five stores with opera house above offices. Now in course of erection.

On the opposite corner is the First National Bank of Arcadia, of which T. B. King the popular and gifted financier, is president, who is also a member of the Board of control of the State University located at Gainesville, Florida and widely known through the state as a business man of unusual capacity, with C. C. Chollar, a genial and pleasant gentleman, whose knowledge of men and banking at once ranks him with the first of the state. A. E. Houstoun, the book keeper, a courtly and elegant gentleman. Fathered, cultured and trained by that prince of the old time southern gentleman, Gen'l Pat. Houstoun, of Tallahassee, and W. M. Platt, the teller, than whom no bank has a better one, besides he is the honored and popular mayor of the city.

In this large and elegant brick block is the Arcadia Mercantile Company's three wholesale and retail stores of which Carl Holmer is manager and doing a business of \$150,000 a year, an increase of fifty per cent over last year's sales. This establishment has also store houses, in which to store its heavy stock.

W. E. Daniel, whose wooden stores were destroyed by the fire, has rebuilt two large stone buildings, both of which are occupied by prosperous firms. One of which is leased by M. Kanner & Company, jews, who appear to be gentlemen and men of business sagacity.

The next is W. H. Seward, who lost one of his warehouses and which he has rebuilt with brick making of it an elegant dry goods emporium and whose prosperity is one of the evidences of business ability and what makes a popular and all around good fellow.

The next is D. T. Carlton's brick block with three stores which withstood the fire, one of which is Dishong Brothers, an up-to-date grocery.

The corner store where drugs and books are dispersed by popular young men, a new store, with Harry Cross and Levi McCullers as proprietors, and where our postoffice is.

On the opposite side of the street going west is a handsome stone block being built by Simmons, Langford & Company, Bankers. The bank will occupy the corner, Carlton & Pruitt the large dry goods and millinery establishment who will occupy one of the stores while overhead will be an up-to-date hotel.

The next is a brick block, built by Owen H. Parker and leased to Faulkner & Stonebraker, a flourishing hardware, furniture and buggy establishment, in which building is J. M. Lanier's cold drink, ice cream and restaurant, where a hungry and thirsty man can supply his wants.

Then comes L. L. Morgan's three story hardware and furniture store. Morgan's genius as a mechanic and architect was demonstrated in the erection of this massive, conveniently arranged establishment, so well adapted to his large and growing business.

Adjoining him are two two story stone blocks in course of erection owned by Doctors Ed Greene and Jake Wey, both of whom are prosperous druggists, respected and well patronized by our people.

The next is E. T. Smith's large temporary iron building, in which he does a big business and who will in a short while build one of the largest stores in town.

Then comes, on the same side on the same side on the opposite corner, Walter Graham's lot on which he proposes to build stores and hotel at an early day. His office is in the King Building and he is one of Arcadia's livest men. A genial liberal-hearted and prosperous man and a real estate agent that can not be surpassed, in point of ability by any firm in Florida, having now on sale turpentine and timber land from a town lot to over 300,000 acres.

Next comes Horace Carlton's Meat Market and general grocery store, who was put out of business by the fire and who is cordially welcomed back by his friends and the general public.

Next in this stone block is J. L. Jones, a store almost ready to be occupied. He is building on the east side of the railroad an office for the DeSoto News Printing Company, out of brick.

The next and last new building in stone is F. Morqus' mammoth store, 85 by 60 feetlong, where jewelry, shoes, buggies and harness can be bought, and where a clever Austrian does business in a strictly business way.

This completes the list of new business buildings erected or being erected in our prosperous town to say nothing of dwelling several of which would do credit to a more pretentious city. The writer would like to give publicity to his private opinion of each of these concerns he has casually mentioned and in doing so could use adjectives of the strongest character to represent their personal worth and business ability, but space and the character of this article forbids.

### Our Lawyers.

Our lawyers are men of business ability and character. In the King Block, over the First National Bank three firms have offices. They are: Treadwell & Treadwell, Judge A. E. Pooser and the firm of Swearingen & Brown, Mr. Brown being, at the last election made County Judge of De Soto County.

In the Carlton Block is the law firm of Forrester & Burton, and over Dr. C. H. Smith's Drug Store is W. E. Leitner's law office.

These gentlemen would be prominent in any city in the State, and they are known far and wide as men of unusual ability.

### Our Doctors.

Our doctors also, both as physicians and surgeons, rank with the most learned and skilfull in the State. Heading the list as to age, for it would be odious to draw comparisons, is Dr. C. H. Smith, who runs a Drug Store in connection with his practice as a physician, and whose wife is at the head of one of Arcadia's prosperous Millinery establishments, and Doctors D. L. McSwain, R. L. Cline and Kirby H. Smith.

The dentists are Dr. C. P. Baird and D. G. Barnet, both of whom are busy and accomplished artists in their line, the former in his home, and the latter with an elegant set of offices in the King Block.

### The Real Estate Men.

Our real estate men are Walter Graham and Johnson & Craft, who can sell real estate from a town block to a 300,000 acre tract of all kinds of timber.

### Orange Packing Houses.

Arcadia has five large orange packing houses and doubtless, in this respect is

ahead of any town in the State, for Arcadia is the center of the orange industry of South Florida.

These houses are owned and run by Heard & Reynolds, Stephen J. Carlton, Childers & Rawls, the DeSoto Fruit Co., of which E. A. Thomas is part owner and manager and Scott Brothers.

These firms work about four hundred men, besides averaging some twelve or fifteen teams to each house.

### Livery Stables.

Arcadia is well supplied with livery and sale stables, led by W. E. Robertson, Wm. C. Hooker, and J. W. Craig.

### Arcadia's Hotels.

The hotels are owned and managed by Capt. A. Roe, of the Arcadia House, the Southern by J. H. Fuls, Florida House by Mrs. J. E. Whidden and the Royal by Mrs. Donaldson.

There are numerous private boarding houses and still it is hard to obtain board in our thriving city and to hire a dwelling is entirely out of the question.

### Our High School.

The Arcadia High School has Professor Maloy as principal, assisted by Prof. A. A. Price of Wauchula, Miss Leitner, daughter of the Rev. Dr. Leitner of Bartow; Miss Laura Mitchell, of Arcadia; Miss Rainey, of N. C. and Misses Beard and Anderson.

### Churches.

The Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian and Episcopal Churches are all supplied with pastors who lead the religious sentiment of the town. These men are active and devoted to their calling, and are popular, able and eloquent preachers.

### Our Good Roads.

Arcadia has over six miles of rocked road within the corporate limits and leading out in every direction the roads are graded and are to be rocked in the near future.

### Electric Lights.

Arcadia has as good electric lights as any town in the State, if not better, an ice plant and cold storage inferior to none, a water works plant, in part completed, a telephone system that we can't brag on. The system is all right, but oh my, the 'phones. They must have been the original ones and they do not improve with age or using.

### Location.

Arcadia is the central town of the County of Desoto and the County site. Built on a high and rolling plat of ground with the picturesque Peace River a mile west of the Court House, flowing toward the Gulf of Mexico, is a delightful location for homes as well as business and manufactories.

Here will be found neat and handsome dwellings, yards set in orange trees, which afford perpetual shade, and also where flowers, rich and rare perpetually bloom, from the regal rose to the tiny daisy, and where tropical plants, ferns and geraniums grow and blossom in the open.

Birds from the most glorious mocking bird to the tiny wren, birds of the richest plumage, from the cardinal to the Florida canary make their nests in the great orange trees and rear their young, unmolested by the sling shot of the cruel boy, and whose songs make harmony in the quiet hours of the night and which fill the morning and the twilight hours with the sweetest and most thrilling of bird music.

### Arcadia's Pleasant Drives.

Arcadia furnishes elegant rides. Her people own fine horses and buggies and her open, undulating roads furnish inspiring scenes, when Aurora blushes at the rising sun, or when the God of day wraps himself in the gorgeous tapestries of twilight and sinks to rest behind the pavillions of the west.

These are not imaginary pictures for Florida elsewhere, nor any other State presents sunrise or sunset pictures more beautiful or ravishingly lovely than our city.

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